

News Release

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Minnesota officials on alert after Wisconsin reports emerald ash borer near La Crosse

Officials urge Minnesotans to avoid transporting firewood

ST. PAUL, Minn. – With today's news that Wisconsin state officials confirmed an emerald ash borer infestation south of La Crosse, officials in Minnesota are stepping up monitoring efforts and alerting residents about the destructive tree pest's ability to spread by hiding in firewood.

Emerald ash borer (EAB) is an invasive beetle that attacks and kills ash trees. Since its accidental introduction into North America, EAB has killed millions of ash trees in 10 eastern states. While it has not been found in Minnesota, the beetle was found in Wisconsin for the first time near Lake Michigan last summer. Today's announcement marks the first time EAB has been found in western Wisconsin. The new infestation is near the town of Victory, on the east bank of the Mississippi River just 1 mile southeast of the Minnesota-Iowa border.

With an estimated 900 million ash trees, Minnesota is a prime target for EAB. In response to the Wisconsin finding, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) has sent inspectors to Houston County to determine if the infestation has spread into Minnesota. MDA will also step up EAB monitoring in southeastern Minnesota in the coming weeks. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is working closely with the MDA, as well as the states of Iowa and Wisconsin, to help coordinate a joint response. MDA and DNR officials are working together to alert stakeholders of the development.

The metallic-green adult beetles are a half inch long, and are active from May to September. Signs of EAB infestation include one-eighth inch, D-shaped exit holes in ash tree bark and serpentine tunnels packed with sawdust under the bark. EAB larvae kill ash trees by tunneling into the wood and feeding on nutrients inside the tree. While EAB spreads slowly on its own, it can hitch a ride to new areas when people transport firewood or other wood products infested with the larvae. More information about the pest and its impact can be found on the MDA website at www.mda.state.mn.us. DNR also is offering more information on its forest health site at www.dnr.state.mn.us/treecare/forest_health/index.html.

MDA and DNR officials urge Minnesota citizens to take several steps to help keep EAB from spreading:

- **Don't transport firewood, even within Minnesota.** Don't bring firewood along on a camping trip. Buy the wood you need locally from an approved vendor. Don't bring extra wood home with you.
- **Don't buy or move firewood from outside Minnesota.** If someone comes to your door selling firewood, ask them about the source of the wood. If it came from outside Minnesota, don't buy it.
- **Watch for signs of infestation in your ash trees.** If you suspect your ash tree could be infested by EAB, visit www.mda.state.mn.us/invasives/eab and use the "Do I Have Emerald Ash Borer?" checklist.

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This release is available on the MDA website at <http://www.mda.state.mn.us>

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